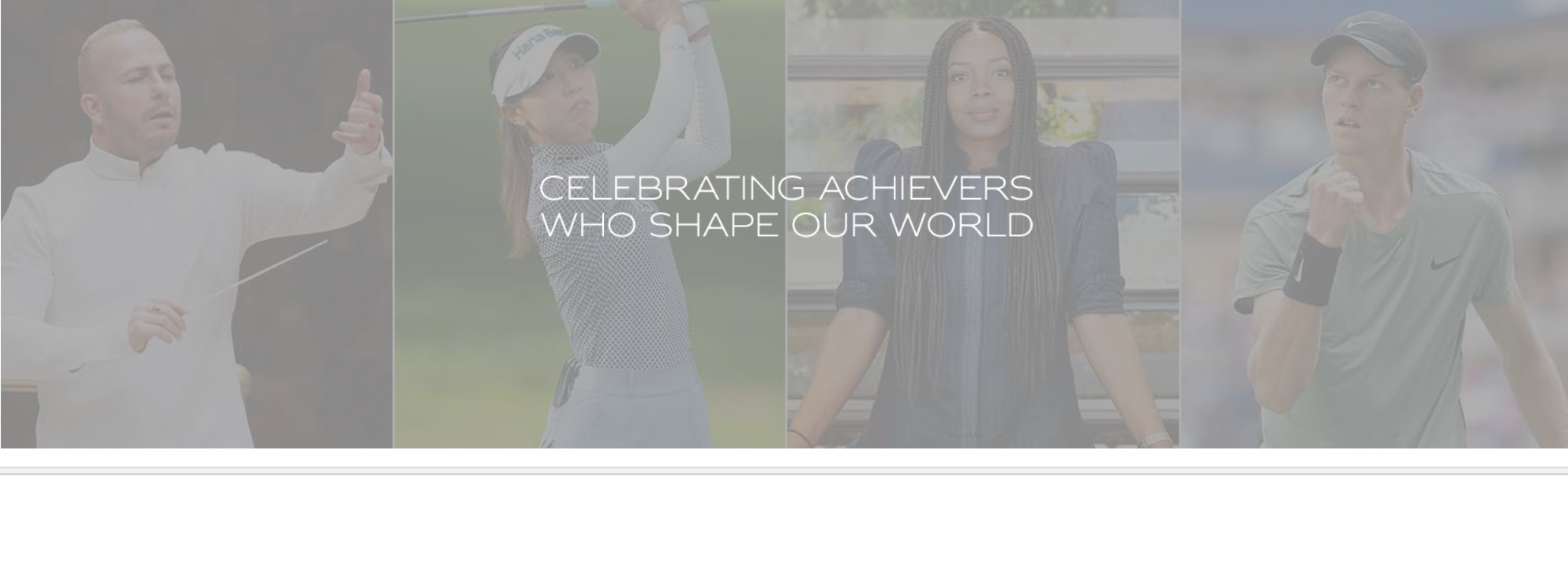
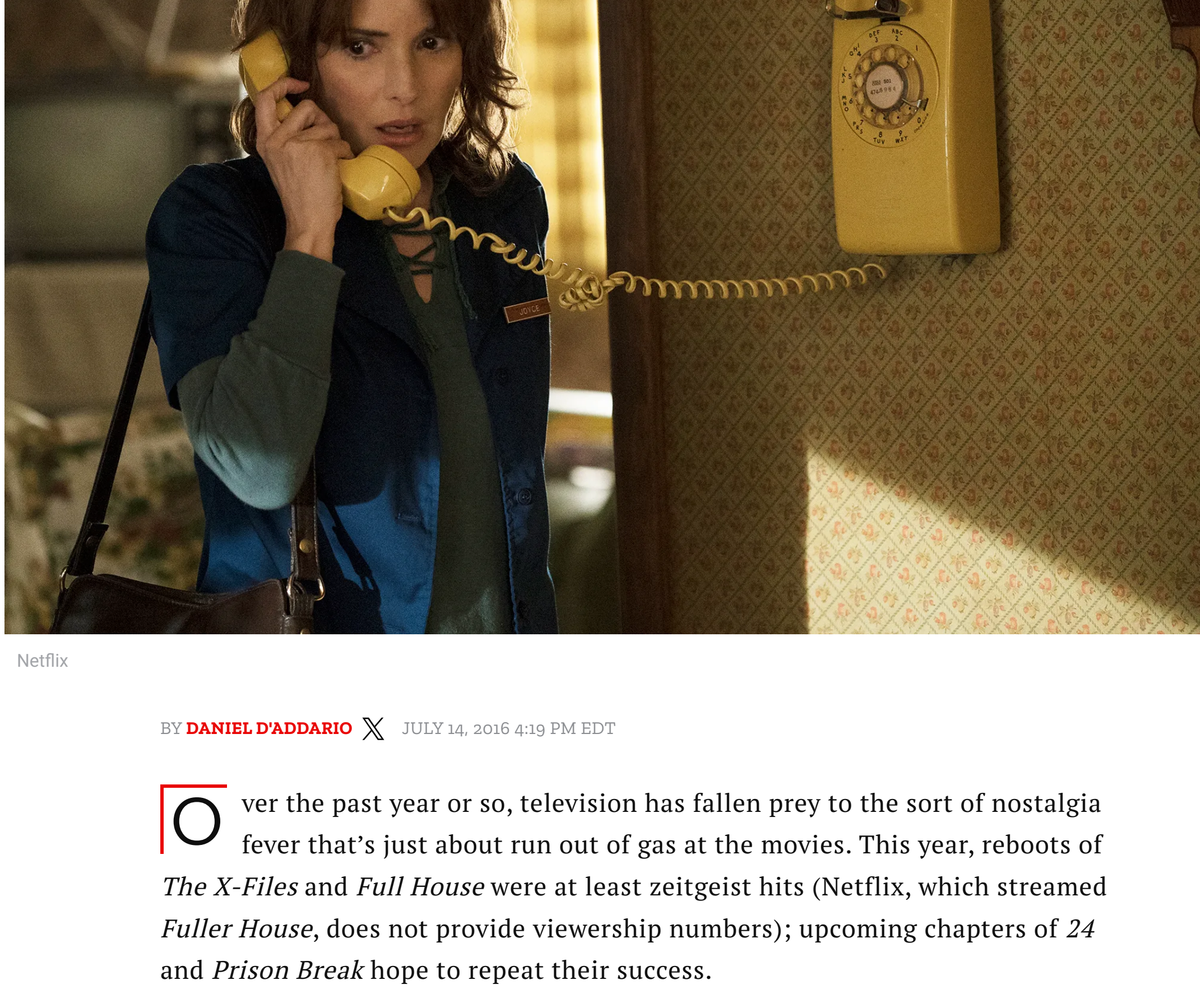




ENTERTAINMENT

Review: *Stranger Things* Is Nostalgia That Works

4 MINUTE READ



Netflix

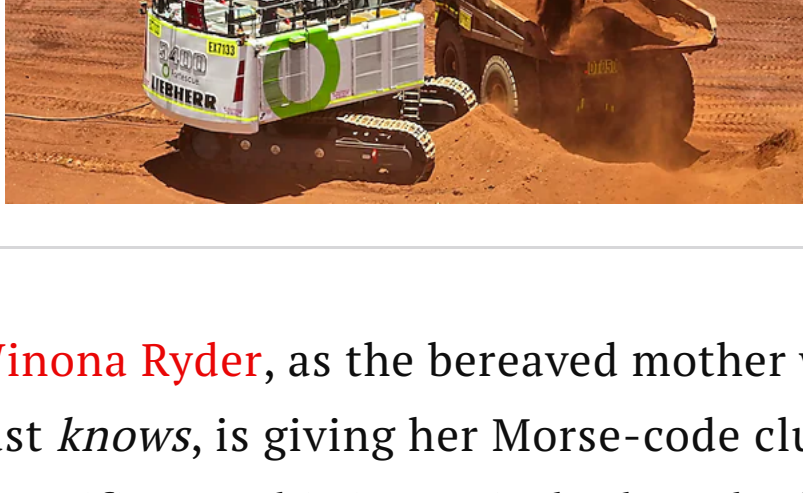
BY DANIEL D'ADDARIO X JULY 14, 2016 4:19 PM EDT

Over the past year or so, television has fallen prey to the sort of nostalgia fever that's just about run out of gas at the movies. This year, reboots of *The X-Files* and *Full House* were at least zeitgeist hits (Netflix, which streamed *Fuller House*, does not provide viewership numbers); upcoming chapters of *24* and *Prison Break* hope to repeat their success.

There are limits to this sort of storytelling, and not merely the artistic limits imposed by taking one's cues from artworks rooted in a different time; as poor box-office results for sequels to *Neighbors*, *Now You See Me*, and *Snow White and the Huntsman* this year prove, there's only so much of yesterday's news that viewers can be expected to consume.

Which should augur poorly for *Stranger Things*, Netflix's new series (streaming Friday) that explicitly takes its cues from 1980s family thrillers like *E.T.*, *Gremlins*, and *Poltergeist*. The show's tone, giddily indulgent of both small-town cliché and monster-serial oddity, is so backward-looking that, on first blush, it's hard to imagine how the show could succeed, artistically or commercially, in our more ironic age. And yet *Stranger Things* is an unqualified success—a show whose fondness for its own source material makes its nostalgia warm and inclusive. It isn't using familiar tropes to demand your money or your attention. It's welcoming you into a fan club.

The story of *Stranger Things* is both derivative—a reference-laden vehicle to deliver thrills and emotion—and wildly original. It'd be unfair to reveal too much that happens in the show's eight-episode run, but the basics include a disappeared young boy named Will and the attempts of his Dungeons and Dragons buddies to locate him in concert with a mysterious girl whose telekinetic powers might have something to do with the nearby military facility (and its top baddie, played by Matthew Modine), and with the entity that snatched Will. The backdrop to it all is the slow decompensation of Will's mother as she attempts to find her son, alternately by law enforcement or by communing with the spectral realm.

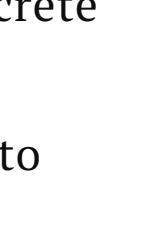
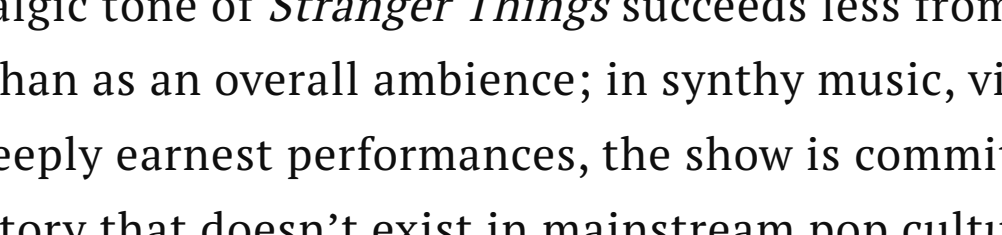


BRANDED CONTENT
Decarbonizing Profit: Fortescue's Business Case for a Fossil-Free Future
BY FORTESCUE

Winona Ryder, as the bereaved mother whose display of Christmas lights, she just *knows*, is giving her Morse-code clues to her son's whereabouts, is magnificent. This is precisely the role the definitive 1990s movie star needed to transition into artistry as an adult. In many of her movie roles, from *Edward Scissorhands* to *Heathers*, Ryder reacts to bizarre situations with a sense of ironic, chill acceptance. Here amid a sea of kids who'd believe anything and government officials who know exactly what's going on, she's our one tether to rational thinking—she knows it doesn't make sense that the Christmas lights would have a message for her, but also knows that it doesn't make sense not to pay attention. The contradictions force her to gradually fray and come undone, and Ryder is up to the challenge.

Ryder provides the realism, but the rest of *Stranger Things* is faked with loving care. There's a teen romance subplot, and a neighborhood mom who just wants to know what her son is getting up to; there's, notably, a town sheriff (David Harbour) who knows all the contours of Ryder's story and is all too willing to help. These details are tied to place in an everytown sense. The story takes place in "Hawkins, Indiana," a placeholder that provides the sort of small-town hominess against which imaginative terror pops all the more.

ROLEX IS PROUD TO PARTNER WITH THE PERSON OF THE YEAR
[DISCOVER MORE](#)

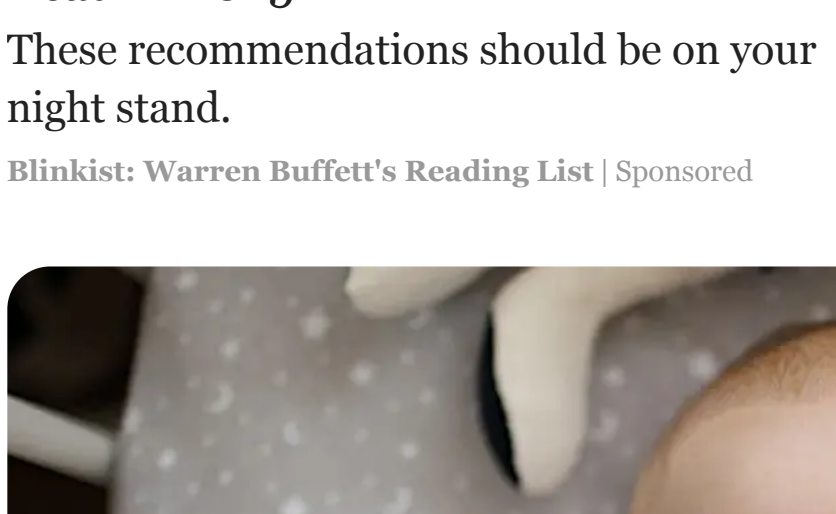


I'm not a scholar of *Goonies*-era cinema, so surely there's an entire layer of references and Easter eggs that didn't find their perfect audience in me. But that's okay. The nostalgic tone of *Stranger Things* succeeds less from discrete moment to moment than as an overall ambience; in synth music, vivid shooting style, and deeply earnest performances, the show is committed to selling you a sort of story that doesn't exist in mainstream pop culture anymore. It's not exhuming a property—it's reviving a way of seeing the world, as one of good friends and loving parents along with wicked government agents, full of possible demons and opportunities for true heroism. I'd go back there anytime.

MORE MUST-READS FROM TIME

- **Cybersecurity Experts** Are Sounding the Alarm on DOGE
- Meet the **2025 Women of the Year**
- The Harsh Truth about **Disability Inclusion**
- Why Do More **Young Adults Have Cancer?**
- **Colman Domingo** Leads With Radical Love
- How to Get Better at **Doing Things Alone**
- **Michelle Zauner** Stares Down the Darkness

CONTACT US AT LETTERS@TIME.COM



5 Books Warren Buffett Wants You to Read In 2025

These recommendations should be on your night stand.

Blinklist: Warren Buffett's Reading List | Sponsored



¿Padece una enfermedad renal crónica (ERC)?

Es posible que cumpla con los requisitos para participar en uno de nuestros estudio...

Trialbe | Sponsored

[Más información](#)



The Top 10 Baby Boy Names of All Time According to AI

The top baby boy names of all time have transcended trends and maintained their popularity due to their historical resonance and cultural significance.

TIME



American Investor Warren Buffett Recommends: 5 Books For Turning...

Known as the "Oracle of Omaha", Warren Buffett shares the five books he thinks will...

Blinklist: Warren Buffett's Reading List | Sponsored



Esta nueva alarma con cámara es casi regalada en Mar Del Plata (ver precio)

¡La alarma económica que está revolucionando el mercado en Argentina!

Verisure | Sponsored

[Más información](#)



Esta nueva alarma con cámara es casi gratuita en Mar Del Plata (ver precio)

¡La alarma económica que está revolucionando el mercado en Argentina!

Verisure | Sponsored

[Más información](#)



Científica argentina revela hallazgos sobre el magnesio

Investigadora de Argentina expone conclusiones relevantes de su estudio sobr...

Salud Esencial | Sponsored

[Leer más](#)



Contrata Movistar Fibra. Más velocidad para ganar siempre.

La mejor velocidad y conexión con esta promo imperdible de Internet Movistar ...

Movistar | Sponsored

[Haz clic aquí](#)



El precio de esto kit de alarma que arrasa en Buenos Aires te sorprenderá

Calcula tu cotización en menos de un minuto

Verisure Alarma | Sponsored

[Ver oferta](#)



The 10 Most Beautiful Women in History According to AI

We highlight the 10 most beautiful women in history based on their physical charm, impactful legacies, and cultural resonance.

TIME

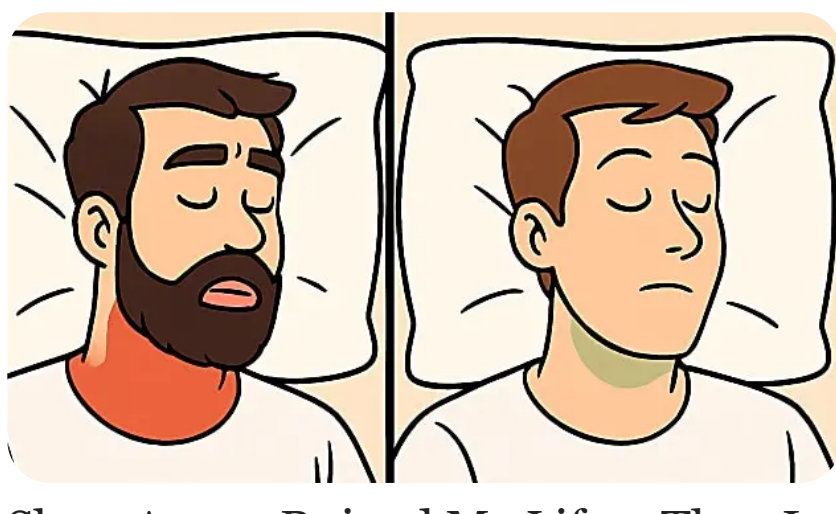


Investigadora argentina revela hallazgos sobre el magnesio

Investigadora de Argentina expone conclusiones relevantes de su estudio sobre el magnesio

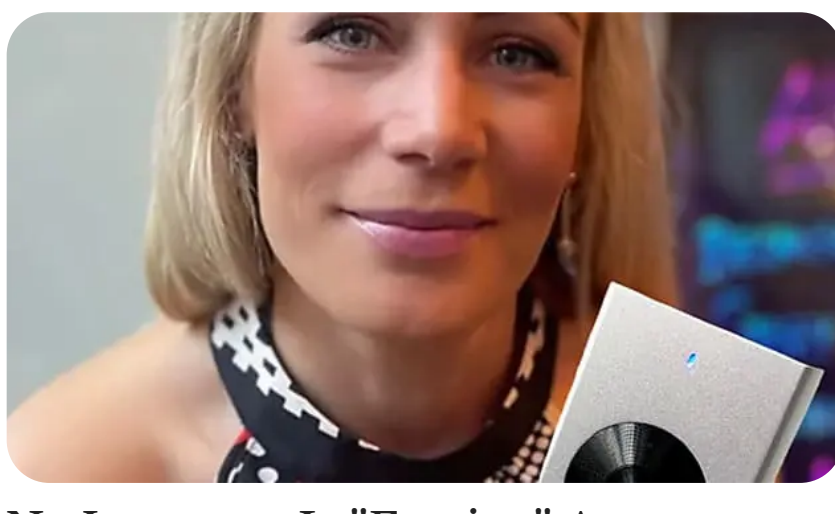
Salud Esencial | Sponsored

[Leer más](#)



Sleep Apnea Ruined My Life – Then I Found This Simple Trick

Health Insight | Sponsored



No Language Is "Foreign" Anymore

Thanks To This Innovative and Clever...

Enneece 2.0 | Sponsored



Trump Issues Blistering Response After Iran Threatens U.S.

"A burned out, blown up country with no future, a decimated military, a horrible economy, and death all around them," Trump said of Iran.

TIME



Alarma WiFi casi regalada: instalación gratuita en un día en Buenos Aires

Cotización en menos de un minuto

Verisure Alarma | Sponsored

[Más información](#)

TIME

